### Backyard composting troubleshooting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Possible Causes</th>
<th>Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rotten odor / too wet</td>
<td>Excess moisture (anaerobic bacteria) or too much food</td>
<td>Turn pile, add dry materials, such as leaves, sawdust, wood chips, or straw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ammonia odor</td>
<td>Too much grass (nitrogen)</td>
<td>Add brown material such as leaves, wood chips, or straw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low pile temperature</td>
<td>Pile too small</td>
<td>Make pile bigger or insulate sides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insufficient moisture</td>
<td>Add water while turning pile or insulate sides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor aeration</td>
<td>Turn pile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of green (nitrogen)</td>
<td>Mix in green sources such as grass clippings or food scraps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cold weather</td>
<td>Increase pile size or insulate pile with extra layer of material, such as straw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High pile temperature</td>
<td>Pile is too large</td>
<td>Reduce pile size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Insufficient ventilation</td>
<td>Turn pile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pest (rats, raccoons, etc.)</td>
<td>Presence of meat scraps and/or fatty food waste</td>
<td>Remove meat and fatty foods from pile, or cover with a layer of soil, leaves, or sawdust, or use an animal-proof compost bin and turn to increase heat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Backyard composting is as easy as 1, 2, 3...**

1. **Space**
2. **Food/yard waste**
3. **Time for nature to take its course**

For more information on composting, go to: composting.ces.ncsu.edu/home-composting

(828) 254-1776
How to start a simple static bin for backyard composting:

1. Take 9’ long X 3’ high of hog wire and make a cylinder with a 3 ft. diameter. Zip-tie it together on a 4’ stake.

2. Place on ground in a sunny area and place sticks on the bottom to allow air from the bottom. Add about 6” of browns. Keep a stockpile of browns available.

3. Layer greens (food scraps, etc.) on top of the browns. Cover the greens with twice as many browns. Ensure the greens are in the middle of the pile and no food is on the outer edges.

4. Continue to add greens, covering each time with twice as many browns.

5. Advanced step – Turn pile and water when needed.

COMPOSTING Do’s & Don’t’s

- Place your bin close to a water source
- Let it get too dry or too wet
- Layer green and brown materials
- Leave food showing
- Keep it diverse with a range of ingredients
- Add dairy or meat products

For more information on composting, go to: composting.ces.ncsu.edu/home-composting

GREENS (Nitrogen rich)  BROWNS (Carbon rich)  Avoid including these materials in backyard compost

- Vegetables / fruit peels and scraps
- Coffee grounds and tea bags
- Green grass clippings
- Green garden waste
- Flowers
- Egg shells
- Wood and wood pellet ash (sparingly)

- Dried leaves and brown grass clippings
- Pine and spruce needles
- Paper, cardboard, and newspaper
- House plants
- Pruning and cuttings (these help create air pockets)
- Sawdust from untreated wood
- Straw

- Meat, fish, and bones attract animals
- Dairy products in large quantities make the compost smell bad
- Fat, oil, and grease in large quantities slow down the process
- Feces (kitty litter, dog doo, humanure) contain pathogens
- Weeds with seeds or persistent roots
- Diseased plants
- Ash or sawdust from chemically treated or painted wood

Composting is nature’s way of recycling food and other organic materials back into nutrient rich soil. It is the accelerated process of natural decomposition of organic materials. The end product of compost is called humus, a nutritious dark soil that is used as topsoil in the garden to enrich it with minerals and vitamins.

Composting helps sustain the planet by decreasing the waste sent to the landfill.